

1597 ✓

THE
FARM HOUSE:
A COMEDY,
IN THREE ACTS.

AS ALTERED
BY J. P. KEMBLE, *K*
AND FIRST ACTED AT
THE THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE.

MAY 1, 1789.

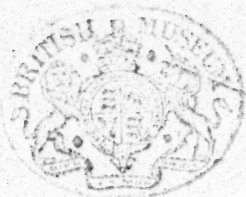
THE SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR J. DEBRETT, OPPOSITE BURLINGTON-
HOUSE, PICCADILLY.

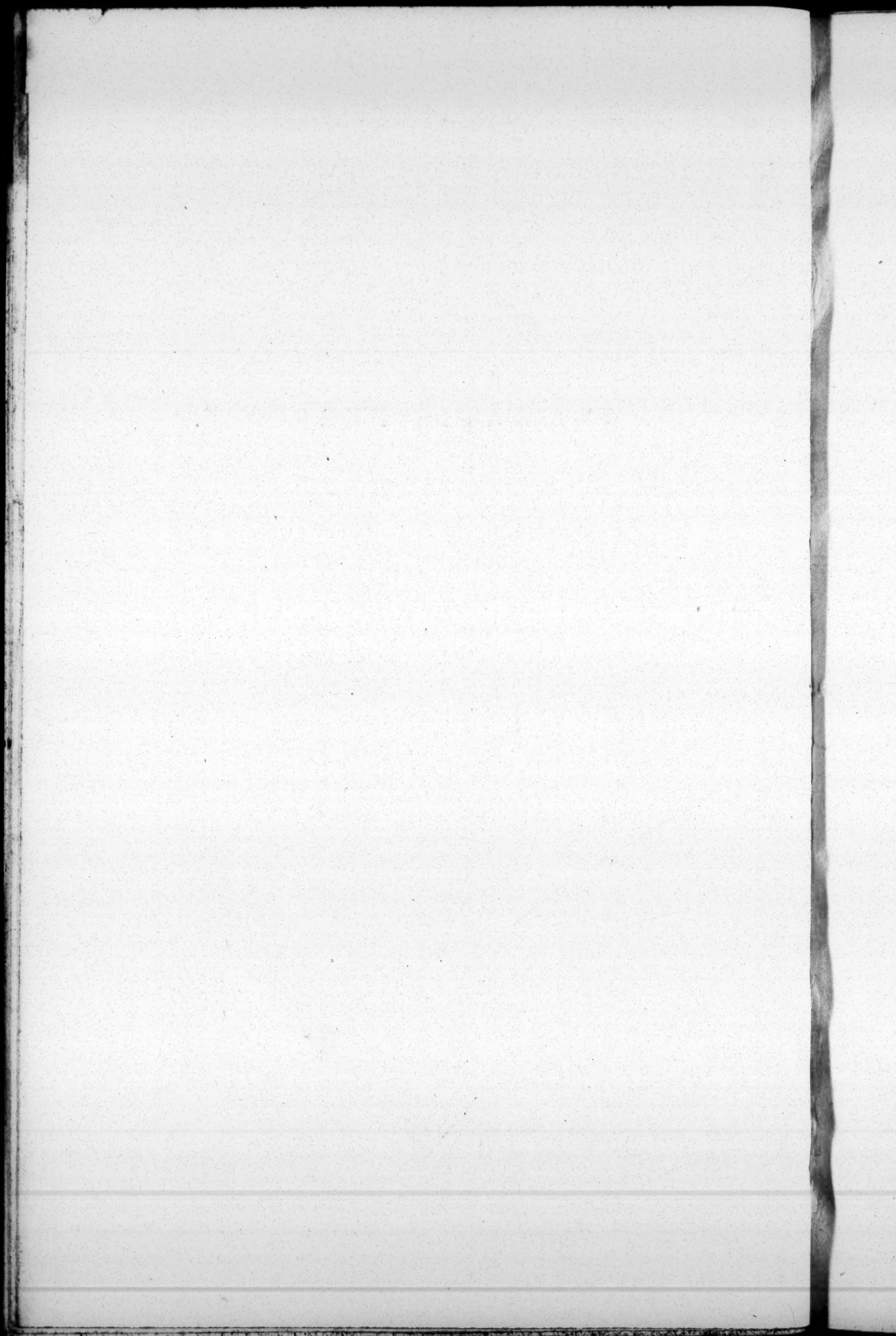
MDCCLXXXIX.

7-25



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MODELY,	MR. WROUGHTON.
FREEHOLD,	MR. AICKIN.
SHACKLEFIGURE,	MR. SUETT.
HEARTWELL,	MR. WHITFIELD,
SIR JOHN ENGLISH,	MR. FAWCETT.
FIRST CONSTABLE,	MR. PHILLIMORE.
SECOND CONSTABLE,	MR. ALFRED.
AURA,	MRS. JORDAN.
FLORA,	MRS. KEMBLE.



THE
FARM HOUSE.

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ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Country Village.

Enter Aura and Flora.

Aura.

COUSIN, I'll go to London.

Flora. What new lure has Satan employed to tempt you thither?

Aura. Only to see some of my own species; a few men and women; for I cannot look on the things we talk'd to just now, but as beings between men and beasts, and of an inferior nature to the people who grow in cities. If I stay longer among the savages, I shall not have vanity enough to keep myself clean. I must go to London to recover my pride.

Flora. And yet how often have I heard thee rail at London, and call it an infectious congregation of vapours; a assemblage of falsehood and hypocrisy.

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Aura.

Aura. 'Tis true; but my affections have taken another turn. The heart of a woman, girl, like a bowl down a hill, continually changes as it rolls. I declare seriously, I never knew my own mind two hours together in my life.

Flora. Cousin, thou art a very wild fop.

Aura. We are all so in our hearts. O' my conscience here they are!

Flora. What?

Aura. Men, my dear, men! Human creatures! look, here they come.

Enter Modely and Heartwell.

Modely. Pretty maidens, stay a moment; turn again and give your assistance to two honest fellows in distress. Our carriage is broke down, our horses are lame, 'tis late, and we have lost our way.

Heartwell. And we would know where——She's intolerably handsome!

Modely. We shall lie to-night——She is a sweet girl.

Flora. Sir, we buy, we don't sell fortune: two Gypsies just now offered us a penny-worth; they pass'd by those elms; I believe you may o'er take 'em.

Aura. Yes, Sir, they will tell you what will happen to you exactly. Good evening. [Going.]

Modely. Why you would not leave me in a strange place, child?

Aura. We have no title at all to you. If you are a couple of stray cattle, all we can do is to bring you to the constable.

Modely. And what then.

Aura.

Aura. Why then we must cry you three market-days, and if nobody owns you, why you must be pounded till somebody does.

Heartwell. Stay one moment, dear creature; vanish not immediately, if you would not have me believe myself in a vision.

Flora. Pray, Sir, come down to my understanding: mine, you see, is as plain as my dress.

Heartwell. In one word then, who is the inhabitant of that farm house in the valley? Our horses fell lame, and we have sent our carriage round there.

Flora. A four old man, Sir; who, when he is in a very good humour, vouchsafes to call me niece.

Aura. And me daughter. There we live, Gentlemen, and are like to live; fretting one another like silk and worsted wove together, 'till we quite wear out.

Heartwell. You have none of the rust of the country upon you: neither your words, your manners, nor any thing but your habits, speak what you would appear.

Aura. My father, and the vicar of our parish, taught us to read and write. But indeed, Sir, my father was born a gentleman, and is by accident only a clown: for having in his youth profusely squander'd a great estate in London, he took an aversion to the town, and turn'd his sword into a ploughshare.

Heartwell. Is it impossible to see this old Cynic? I persuade myself we might revive those seeds of humanity that once liv'd within him, and get entertainment in his farm, for one night only; especially if you would be so good to use your power too, and venture to intercede for a stranger.

Flora. Sir, 'tis impossible!—If you were any form but but what you do——

Heartwell. Ask him only—try a little—use the influence of your eyes—ask him, with a look of pity, and 'tis impossible he should deny you.

Flora. Shall we ask?

Aura. Will you venture?

Flora. I'm half afraid——If you would second me——

Aura. Never fear, my girl, I'll stand bravely by thee. Gentlemen, well endeavour to prevail, and you shall have an answer in the turn of a second.

[*Exeunt Flora and Aura.*

Heartwell. What a couple of jewels are here in rustic work?

Modely. I never beheld any thing so charming!

Heartwell. What a shape.—What——

Modely. An air, a mein, an instep, a foot!

Heartwell. Why you don't mean my girl?

Modely. Nor you mine, I hope?

Heartwell. Ah! rogue! rogue! what a lucky night is this,

Modely. If we get in.——

Heartwell. Hold! here they come, and old Crabtree with'em.

Enter Freehold, Flora, and Aura.

Freehold. Oh! hoh! perhaps these are some of my Covent Garden acquaintance.

Flora. I can't tell; but they have waited a great while for an answer.

Freehold. Let 'em wait, with a murrain.

Aura. Please, Sir, to say ay or no.

Freehold. No then, no! Burn my house and barns, send the murrain among my cattle, the mildew in my corn, and the blight in my fruit, but let no London plagues

plagues come within my doors. What has bewitched you to ask such a question?

Flora. They desire in common humanity, as they are gentlemen.

Freehold. Gentlemen! hah! They are the bane of your sex. The devil did less mischief in the form of the serpent to Eve, than in that to her daughters. Well, I'll talk with 'em to oblige you.

Modely. Sir, the unexpected occasion of this trouble—

Freehold. Oons, Sir, speak truth; I know what you are pumping for; a pretty excuse for an unseasonable visit. I have not told one lie in compliment these thirty years.

Heartwell. Nor heard one neither?

Freehold. No, Sir, nor heard one. Here we only make up a few necessary lies for a market day, or so.

Modely. But we would only say in plain words—

Freehold. I'll tell you what honourable designs you two have clubb'd for, in plain words: Your horses were to fall lame; you were to be benighted; and making use of my humanity for entrance into my house, you very honestly hope for an opportunity to ruin my family. Ask your consciences, is it not so? hah!

Heartwell. We confess the charge is too generally true; but we beg leave to be excepted.

Freehold. Whence came you?

Heartwell. From London.

Freehold. From London; so I thought again: the mart of iniquity; Satan's chief residence. He picks up a vagabond soul or two now and then with us; but he monopolizes there.

Modely. But, Sir, to our purpose: Is there no security to be taken for one night only?

Freehold,

Freehold. There is, if you'll accept the terms. Look ye, gentlemen; I have one faithful friend in the world—'tis honest Towzer, a true bred mastiff; one who never scrapes or kisses my hand but in honest truth, who will stand by me with his best blood. Now he does me the favour to lie every night at my bed's foot. I am likewise master of a brace of large-boned threshers—and these three have been the guardians of my farm these ten years. They have no more respect than I for a laced coat:—you know the rest. I'll ha' no poaching.

Heartwell. Sir, we accept your terms. He that intends no wrong, fears none.

Freehold. There then, there lies your way.

[*Exeunt Freehold, Modely, and Heartwell.*]

Flora. Laud, cousin, he has taken 'em both in.

Aura. I tremble so I don't know what to do.

Flora. It was your fault.

Aura. You were bewitched to ask him.

Flora. Why did you not advise me to the contrary?

Aura. O dear, my heart beats.

Flora. Ay, it beats to arms child.—The garrison is besieged!

Aura. Come let's in —Courage, and the day's our own.

[*Exeunt.*]

S C E N E II.

A Hall in the Farm.

Enter Freehold, Modely, and Heartwell.

Freehold. Forget you have been within the walls of a city, and we shall agree well enough.

Heartwell. But, Sir, do you never, never intend to see London again?

Freehold

Freehold. Never, never, I tell you.

Heartwell. Why so, Sir.

Freehold. I am unqualified for conversation there. The few virtues you have you hide; and affect crimes to be agreeable. In a word, you are all false, double-fac'd, execrable hypocrites. Come, will you drink a cup of brown ale before you eat?

Heartwell. I thank you, Sir, but I am not thirsty now.

Freehold. Do you never drink but when you are dry? We have none of your French wines—we live upon English beef and beer, the staple of our own country.

Heartwell. And every honest Briton ought to encourage it.

Freehold. Right boy: Come, will you smoke a pipe before supper. A pipe is the best whet in the world.

Modely. No, by no means. Pray, Sir, who is the Lord of your Manor, here?

Freehold. We have no Lord, Sir; we have a Lady.

Modely. A lady?

Freehold. Ay, Sir; she lives at the great house on the hill above, with an old knight, her kinsman, whose estate joins to her's; one Sir John English. But come into this room and drink a cup of ale before supper; nay, I will have it so.

Modely. We'll follow you.

Freehold. What, you see the wenches coming; remember our articles, or Towzer's the word.

[*Exit.*

Enter Aura and Flora.

Modely. Hah!—my mademoiselle once again!—I'll kill thee, my dear little thief, with kisses,

Aura

Aura. Then I shall be the first maid that ever died that death, and deserve to be buried with my face downwards.

Modely. Whither do you run?---What, must I follow you?

Aura. If you have courage;---the old dragon is in the next room.

Modely. Hang the dragon;---I am a knight errant, and 'tis my business to conquer dragons.

Aura. Come on, then---Hercules the second.

[*Exeunt Modely and Aura.*]

Heartwell. Hear me---let me swear to you, fair maid.---

Flora. What is it you wou'd swear?---That you love me?

Heartwell. Really, I never liked a woman better in my life.

Flora. I think you are something more than tolerable; ---I was going to say agreeable.

Heartwell. Do you like me?

Flora. As I might a picture.

Heartwell. Do you take me only for the shadow of a man?

Flora. To me no more; for I look on this accident only as the idle delusion of a morning dream.

Heartwell. Then let me wake thee into real happiness: the little God of Love shall wanton in thy heart, as he now plays and revels in thy eyes.

Flora. Hold? hold!--you are running back into metaphor;---why this is downright poetry. Pray come to common sense again.

Heartwell.

Heartwell. That is very true;---to be short, then, whereabouts is your bedchamber?

Flora. What then, it seems, you do certainly assure yourself, that having squeez'd my hand, and sigh'd out a few unnecessary fine things, I shall fall plumb into your arms, as cats get birds by gazing at 'em.

Heartwell. Come, my love, this dialect is affected as t'other. Take this jewel, accept it, wear it as a token of the most pure affection; you shall live with me, command me and my fortune. I'll take you from this cottage, and this cross old man; and you shall live, as your beauty and your wit demand you should, in all the various pleasures this gay world can give you.

Flora. Here, Sir; take your toy again.---I thank you humbly for the mighty favour.---What, would you barter with me for myself? Bribe me out of my person?---'Tis poorly done.---But know, Sir, I have a heart within, that proudly tells me, no price shall ever buy it. But is it honest in you to tempt that innocence you should protect?---Reason distinguishes men from beasts; and virtue, men from men. Think---reflect:---Are your intentions agreeable to justice, honour, gratitude?---You wrong yourself, as well as me. Farewell! [Exit.

Heartwell. She has stung me to the soul with her too just reproaches. I am conscious and ashamed of my crime. My heart burns within me---she sinks into my mind---I must have her, though at the price of liberty. I'll ask her uncle's consent immediately. But what will the world say?---I renounce it---I abjure it.

I'll give her all my future life; and prove,
Like Anthony;---the World Well Lost for Love.

[Exit.

END OF ACT I.

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ACT

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

A Rural Prospect, with the Farm House.

Enter Modely and Heartwell from the House.

Modely.

WAS ever any thing so agreeable?

Heartwell. What palace cou'd have entertain'd us like this cottage?

Modely. The blunt old man gave us a meal, plain and undisguised.

Heartwell. Artless and honest like himself.---Did you observe the sweetness and purity of this little dwelling?---The honey suckles hid the light of our small casement---

Modely. And mix'd their odours with the sharp morning air, and wak'd me early.

Heartwell. Why, did you sleep?

Modely. Like a whipt top---Did not you?

Heartwell. Ah, no! my heart was dancing the galloping nag---My spirits were in arms; and all the mobility of my blood roar'd out incessantly---Flora! Flora!--Flora!

Modely. What then you are really in love, that is a-la-romanfki.

Heartwell. So much in love, I cou'd fight for her; I could die for her; and will marry her.

Modely. What you have a mind to put your passion to

a vio-

2 violent death——Marry her—Do so—do so——’Tis a certain cure.

Heartwell. Be not severe; her beauty, George, will make my joys immortal.

Modely. I can’t believe either in the immortality of her beauty, or your passion.

Heartwell. May be so; but I shall put them to the trial.

Modely. Fly! fly, begone; for here comes my temptation. [Exit *Heartwell*.

Enter Aura.

Aura. Gentlemen, the tea’s ready.

Modely. Tea! Why you live within doors as elegantly as the people of our world. This cottage is like a diamond in the quarry—All rough without; within, all light and beauty, my lovely charming——

Aura. Nay, no more love, I entreat, I petition. Come, leave this whimsical dumb cant of sighing and ogling; and tell me, in plain English, what you’d have.

Modely. Cou’d not you help one to a little ready beauty?

Aura. What wou’d you give for a small purchase that way?

Modely. Heart for hear, my dear.

Aura. That was the old way they say; before money was in fashion, they used to barter in kind.

Modely. Let us renew that honest custom in the age of innocence and love.

Aura. Have you a clear title to the thing you wou’d sell? That heart of yours, I warrant, has been mortgaged over and over.

Modely. Humph! it has been a little dipp’d, but I have always honorably redeem’d it, and was as free as air till I beheld those eyes.

Aura. Ah! that humble killing bow. Go on. Now I know you are to talk of chains, and daggers, and loves, and hearts, and flames, and darts.

Modely. Is it possible to hide a passion, which though my tongue is silent, breaks out in every look and motion.

Aura. Wonderful pretty this! But, Sir, I know the natural whirl of the mind of man; 'tis as inconstant as a turnstile; his heart's a tennis ball; his inclination's the racket; and his passions drive it round the world.

Modely. Dare only to try me, and if you like me not, discharge me.

Aura. She deserves to be robb'd, who takes a servant that brings a certificate of his being a thief.

Modely. 'Tis not engraven here, I hope.

Aura. Yes, truly, there is a sort of a faithless, loving, London, lying air, that hangs upon your features, and frightens me terribly.

Modely. Then propose your own security; bind me as you please.

Aura. Agreed. Suppose then I lik'd you well enough to make a husband of you; would you marry me? Look ye there—Confounded—Astonished at once; mentioning the word only has put the man into a cold sweat, I profess.

Modely. No, no, but I wou'd have you leave this four old man, and this rustic cot, and take your flight with me and love. Love shall conduct us with his purple wings; joys shall meet joys, in circles and new pleasures chase the swift hours away. Thou shalt be dearer to me, than any wife can be.

Aura. So 'tis out at last. What then am I to be your mistress only; have every inconvenience of a wife, with
the

the scandal of a wench ; and perhaps be forced to cluck a brood of illegal chickens after me, and peck about the parish for my subsistence ?

Modely. No, my dear, it shall not be within my power to wrong you ; I will settle——

Aura. The Lord knows what with a sham-lawyer.

Modely. Choose your own lawyer, take your own security, make your own trustees ; you shall have an inheritance in my heart and my land, as firm as if you were born to it.

Aura. To be serious then, since you are so. I'll tell you all the inheritance I boast, or wish for, is this low, humble cottage ; and a mind, I hope a virtuous mind, that cannot, even in this situation, bear dishonour. Take back your worthless trifle of a heart, and your more worthless promises ; and know I scorn as much to yield to the mean bargain of your hireling passion, as you do to submit to honorable love. You say the laws of honor, when they are broken, ask life for recompence ; yet, you would falsify your trust to my father—defraud him of his treasure in his child ; inhospitably murder your good host, whose house you enter'd with a promise that would to two common thieves, under such circumstances, be sacred and inviolable.

Modely. Do you know now what you have lost by this canting. I was to have made love to you in soft nonsense. You were to have been very angry, and very kind ; and so I was to have made you the happiest woman in the world with your own consent, that's all.—You see what a fool you have been.

Aura. How came this unworthy imagination into your head,

Modely

Modely. In a dream, deary. Its a pity it was not real.

Aura. Go ; you are a devil.

Modely. Come ; you are an angel.

Aura. Keep your distance.

(Sings) Young I am, and fore, afraid
Would you hurt a harmless maid ;
Lead an innocent astray ?
Tempt me not, kind Sir, I pray.

[Exit.

Modely. I'll follow the to the world's end.

[Exit.

S C E N E . II.

A Village. Bells heard at a Distance.

Enter Heartwell, Flora, and Several Countrymen and women.

Heartwell. My good neighbours, I thank you all. I beg you'll excuse me now ; here is something to drink this lady's health.

[Exit, all but Heartwell, and Flora.

My wife ! my dear ! I am now richer than the sea ; I have a treasure in thee, more valuable than what the earth contains.

Enter Shacklefigure.

How now ! what solemn piece of formality, what man of wires is this that moves towards us ? He stirs by clock-work, like St. Dunstan's giants : he prepares to open his mouth, as if he cou'd not speak without an order of court.

Shacklefigure. Save you, right worshipful Sir.

Heartwell. And you eke also !

Shacklefigure.

Shacklefigure. Sir John English, my most bountiful lord and master, hearing by the mouth of common fame—

Heartwell. Common fame, is a common liar, friend; you have your news from the worst hands—

Shacklefigure. Sir you break the thread of my discourse.

Heartwell. Well, join it again, and go on.

Shacklefigure. Sir John English, my most bountiful lord and master, hearing by the mouth of common fame, that you were join'd in holy wedlock to the niece of his good tenant, Solomon Freehold, sends his wishes, ambassadors, by me, the humblest of his vassals, that you and your fair bride will be pleased to dine on this day of your marriage at his house.

Heartwell. Verily thou hast well unfolded thy message. Now plait it up carefully again, friend, and give my service to thy master, Sir John, and say that my wishes are to be private.

Shacklefigure. Sir, I shall report—or carry back your answer accordingly

Flora. Stay friend! stay a moment (*to Heartwell.*) If I cou'd prevail upon you, you shou'd grant Sir John's request. He has always been to me the most obliging, kindest, best natur'd man. At this time it wou'd look like ingratitude to refuse him. I'll go before, and prepare the old gentleman to receive you; and prevent all ceremonious trouble.

Heartwell. I can deny thee nothing. Tell your master I'll wait on him.

(*Exit Shack. and Flora.*)

Enter Modely.

Ha George! I was looking for you. What shall I do? You shall advise me. Shall I marry my dear little girl, or no?

Modely.

Modely. To marry for love, my friend, is confining your whole body for the error of your eyes only.

Heartwell. Ay ; but where one loves, one would keep a woman to one's self.

Modely. Ha ! ha ! ha ! keep a woman to one's self. He that purchases an estate where all the world takes a right of common, may build churches for atheists, and alms-houses for misers.

Heartwell. But a little legal inclosure is for the comfort of our lives, when the land has been properly cultivated.

Modely. Why you don't really intend to marry this girl ?

Heartwell. Really I believe I shall.

Modely. Indeed !—ah pretty !—Do, do ; fling two thousand pounds a year away upon a cottage Marian ; take the refuse of a bumpkin to your marriage-bed ; and after that be the cuckold of the ploughman.

Heartwell. Sir, I bore your base reflections with temper, while I believed your meaning was friendly ; but now I find you indulge your ill-nature at the expence of a virtuous woman.

Modely. Oh, oh ! you are grave ; that is, you are growing mad indeed, and begin to rattle your matrimonial chains.

Heartwell. I am talking of religion to a heretic ; of morals to a libertine.

Modely. Well, well then, it shall have its toy. Did it cry for a wife ? It shall be tied to it, if nothing else will do, like an idiot with an horn book at his girdle. It shall have a gingerbread wife too, but without any gilding.

Heartwell. Prithee George, don't make me angry with thee in earnest.

Modely

Modely. What is the matter with the man? Art thou mad? Thou art as uneasy as if thou wert married already.

Heartwell. Why then, to confess the honest truth, I am married.

Modely. Married! when?

Heartwell. Just now.

Modely. To whom?

Heartwell. To Flora.

Modely. Very good; and so you come to know, it seems, whether you shall give bond for the debt, when there's an execution upon the goods.

Heartwell. Well, George; but now you know my case, tell me, as a friend, only your opinion of what I have done.

Modely. Done!—you have done a very silly thing; sold yourself for a waxen baby; a painted moppet; a gay, prating, party-coloured paraquito, which little master will play with till he is sick of it, and then in a gloomy mood be ready to twist his neck off. Ha! ha!—a very pretty fellow, to make a vow always to be in the same mind.

Heartwell. Thou art so loose, there is no talking with thee. Come, go with me to Sir John's to dinner, and be as much a wag there as you please.

Modely. No, I have other game in view. Farewell. (*Exit Heartwell.*) Yonder she starts. Aye, there's a Mademoiselle I'll have cheaper, in spite of the high price she holds herself at.

Enter Aura.

My life! my soul!

Aura. I desire you'll let me go.

Modely. What, won't you trust me with a kiss!

(*Kisses her.*)

Aura. You're impudent.

D

Modely.

Modely. You're idle.

Aura. I swear I'll cry out.

Modely. You'll expose yourself.

Aura. Lud Sir, what do you mean?

Modely. To wrestle for a fall only. This way, my dear—(*struggling.*)—nay, now you're a little fool.

Aura. I'll tear your eyes out.—Help! help for heaven's sake!—Murder! murder!

Enter Freehold and two Threshers (who run up to Modely and seize him.)

Freehold. Ah! ware haunches, ware haunches!—There—so, so, the hunt is safe—What vicious cur is this, poaching by himself?—What, my good friend, Mr. Modely! why thou art a very impudent fellow—what canst thou say for thyself, now?

Modely. Say! why I say, that young gentlewoman was very uncivil, and all that.

Freehold. You wou'd have been too civil, and all that. Come bring him along; he shall have a fair race for it. Our moat, Sir, is somewhat wide, but not very clear. Now, unless you can outrun and outswim Towzer, I believe you'll not make a hunting feat of my house in haste.

Modely. Sir, I am a gentleman, and expect to be so used.

Freehold. How!

Modely. Take off your bull-dogs---Let me speak one word with you alone, and I'll tell you.

Freehold. Come on, Sir. I'll trust you; I'll give you more credit than you deserve. Do you hear, be ready when I call. [*Exeunt Countrymen.*] Well, Sir, what have you to say now why sentence shou'd not pass—

Modely. Say! why I say, Sir, that what I did was according

according to the common law; that the common law is custom; and that it has been the custom, time out of mind, for us young fellows, who's blood flows briskly, to use no ceremony with a wholesome cherry cheek, whether in haycock, meadow, barn, or bed.

Freehold. Ay; and so having robb'd the poor girl of all that cou'd be dear to her, you cou'd have humm'd a tune, taken a pinch of snuff, sat down perfectly satisfy'd in the legality of the action, and have reconcil'd yourself to your own reflections, with as much ease as you drink a dish of tea. What provokes you to this injustice?

Modely. Love, love, and joy, old Wormwood; I have made a league with my youth, to get the better of time; I have fast hold of his forelock, and won't let a moment pass without enjoyment.

Impatient sense and nature dies,
And love a second life supplies;
Gentle boy, then fill my cup,
A bumper, Cupid; fill it up.
With youth and wit and noble fires,
Vigorous health, and young desires.

Freehold. This fellow's in a blaze; his blood has set him all on fire.

Modely. I love the whole sex, Sir. The beautiful I adore as angels; the ugly as Indians do the devil, for fear; the witty persuade me; the innocent allure me; the proud raise my ambition; and the humble my charity. Say what you will, I am in love, old boy, from head to foot---I am Cupid's butt, and stand ready to receive his whole quiver.

Freehold. I'll tell thee what thou art---Thou art a romance, finely bound and gilt; and thy inside is full of silly love and lies, senseless, and showish.

Modely. I think thou art the fourest old fellow that ever I met with ; prithe, polish thyself, my dear rough diamond---You invite a man to your house here, and then deny him the only tid bit he has a mind to.

Freehold. You have broke every social virtue ; and yet impudently imagine you are in the character of a gentleman.

Modely. How, Sir, you grow scurrilous. [Going.

Freehold. Nay, you shall hear me, or I'll recall my myrmidons ; a gentleman shou'd not dare to think of doing wrong to any. His love, his friendship, his courage, his generosity, his word, and his honour, should be inviolably bound to the strict laws of virtue.

Modely. This may be the picture of a faint ; but for the character of a fine gentleman, 'tis as unlike it my dear---

Freehold. As you are. Your love, is appetite---your friendship, interest---your courage, brutal butchery---your word, a lie---and your honour, a jest.

Modely. Ha ! ha ! very concise and smart ; but I take nothing ill of thee. Thou art like a frosty morning, sharp and wholesome. Dear Sir, your most obedient servant. You see I have stood your jobation very patiently, and so, compliments being passed on both sides, I humbly take my leave.

Freehold. Hold, Sir, I demand satisfaction for the wrong you have done my family.

Modely. With all my heart, old boy ; your time, place, and weapons. Will you use seconds ?

Freehold. Aye, and thirds too, if you provoke me. Look'ye friend, according to the justest sentiments I can form of this affair, you ought to be knock'd o' the head. But custom, that invades the rights of nature, and makes

us act by senseless example, says, that you have a right to justify one wrong, by committing another.

Modely. Plague to your preamble! Come to the point, Sir.

Freehold. The young woman you have wrong'd has a lover, Sir. A young officer who at present lives with his kinsman, Sir John, above. He shall meet you, and bleed you for this fever. I know the young fellow loves her, and has spirit to do himself justice. I think that is the cant you have for it. He shall meet you half an hour hence in the rookery behind Sir John English's house.

Modely. Odsó! your bullies about you too. Well, Sir, I'll meet him.

Freehold. If you fail, I'll stick your name upon every tree in the parish for a coward, a poltroon, that dares not fight in a wrong cause; and that is a greater reproach to a man of modern honour, than to be called a thief, or a murderer. *(Exit.)*

Modely. An ill-natured old puppy, to engage a man in a quarrel too. However, I think I am pretty well off. This is much better than the discipline of Towzer and the ditch, or than my friend's matrimonial comfort; though 'tis very ugly, methinks too, to fight upon an idle business here. But 'tis the fashion, the mode, and as Old Crabtree says, right or wrong, we are obliged to obey it.

Thus fashionable folly makes us stake
The loss of Virtue for our Honour's sake;
Stronger than Nature, tyrant Custom grows,
For what we venture Life to keep, we lose.

(Exit.)

END OF ACT II.

ACT

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

*A Grove.**Enter Modely.**Modely.*

A FINE evening, really, for a cool thrust or two. Where is the warrior that is to entertain me here? Egad, I wish 'twas over; I don't like it; it sits but qualmishly upon my stomach. Oh! yonder he comes cross the stile. Ho, that's a boy, I think; I suppose he has sent some formal excuse: the women have lock'd him up; the country is rais'd; and the justices have sent their warrants forth to stop all military proceedings, and make up the matter over a cup of October.

*Enter Aura in boy's cloaths.**Aura.* Your servant, Sir.*Modely.* Your's, Sir.

Aura. I am invited hither, Sir, to do justice to an injured beauty, whom I have the honour to be well with; and I suppose you are my man.

Modely. Thy man, lovey! and what then?

Aura. Why then, Sir, on the behalf of that fair one, I demand the honourable amends, Sir. To use violence to a lady, is an affront not to be put up with. To tear the boughs, and offer to haul down the fruit before it was consenting kindly ripe. If you had climbed up the ladder

der of her affections, and gathered it regularly with the consent of the owner, there had been no harm done.

Modely. Hah! thou art a very pretty metaphorical prigster. Hark ye, child, go home presently, or I'll gather a handful of nettles under that hedge, and whip thee most unmercifully.

Aura. I shall whip you through the guts, or make a pair of bellows of your lungs, for this arrogance. What are your weapons?

Modely. Nettletops, infant; nettletops.

Aura. What are you for your country diversions of this sort—flails, cudgels, scythes, back-swords, oaking-towels, or wrestling?

Modely. Would'st thou have me wrestle with a bull-rush?

Aura. Ah! I have brought a stouter man than you, down before now. Or are you for the town gallantries, single rapier, sword and dagger, sword and pistol, single pistol, blunderbuss, demi-cannon, culverin, mortar-piece, or a barrel of gun-powder. I am ready at any of these weapons to wait your commands.

Modely. Look thee, thou impertinent insect; thou may'st be troublesome, though thou can'st not be hurtful; therefore, if thou flyest about my face thus, I shall be forced to pat thee down with my hand, and tread thee out.

Aura. Humph! You are very pert.

Modely. I am so. Pray tell me, though, what interest have you in this lady, that she has engaged your haughty littleness in her affairs?

Aura. Who I, Sir? Oh! I have been her first minister a great while. She is a fine woman, really, considering

sidering she has been rusticated from her birth too. Her only fault is, poor creature, she is doatingly fond of me.

Modely. Indeed! And so thou art her play-fellow; her gentle refreshment; her pretty pillow-boy; her afternoon's cordial, and her tea at breakfast; her evening's slumber, and her morning's indolence.

Aura. Sir, the reputation of a lady is not thus impiously to be sported with. Oons! eat your words; up with 'em again this moment, or I'll ram 'em down your throat with the hilt of my sword.

Modely. Cool thyself, Narcissus; cool thyself, child; relieve thy reason with a dram of reflection. 'Tis the town talk; the whole village, and all the parishes round, ring of it. I am sure thou wouldst not die a martyr to falsehood. Why thy engagements there are known to every body; 'tis no secret, my prettyness.

Aura. Ay, Sir, 'tis true; but 'tis not so gallant to enter into particulars of that sort. Though, as you say, indeed, I am sensible 'tis no secret. The affair has made a noise; the fury of the poor creature's passion did now and then blind her discretion. I think this is the seventh duel I have engaged in for her sake already. The seventh, no, the eighth. There were three justices, two excisemen, a parson, the apothecary, and yourself.

Modely. Thou art the most impudent, wicked, little, bragging, lying son of a whore that ever I met with.

Aura. Demme, Sir, son of a whore in your teeth! What, because I have reprieved you, suffered you to breathe a minute or two longer while I diverted you with my gallantries, you grow insolent.

Modely. Thou art a very popgun charged with air.

Aura. And thou art a wooden blunderbuss without any charge at all.

Modely.

Modely. Thou most insignificant teasing terrier; by heaven, if thou dost provoke me, I will cut thee into minced meat, and have thee dished up for thy mistress's wedding dinner. *(Draws his sword.)*

Aura. *(Presenting a pistol)* Put up your sword; put it up I say; 'sdeath, Sir, this instant, or you die. *(Modely sheaths his sword)* So! so!

Modely. Ha! what have you these tricks too, my little bully?

Aura. Very well; now you have obeyed me, I'll use you like a gentleman. You have a longer reach than I; and therefore it may not be so reasonable to engage with single sword. Here, take one of these; this, or this: *(offering pistols)*. You may change it, or draw it and recharge it, if you suspect my honour.

Modely. *(Taking a pistol.)* How are they loaded?

Aura. Equally, Sir, with a brace of balls.

Modely. *(Aside.)* What can be the meaning of all this? Sure the young dog is not in earnest.

Enter Freehold.

Freehold. Hey! my brave boy! my lad of mettle! my Cupid in arms! There! he stands his ground to an inch! I told you he would find you sport, my Covent-Garden friend. All I can say is, he shoots flying finely.

Modely. Hah!—I am glad you are come, farmer; we were just going to be serious here. This little huff-bluff hector will let nobody lie with your family but himself, it seems:—so egad, if you like it, why—

Freehold. Oh, Sir, he is a perfect Spaniard, with an English heart. I know him—nothing will satisfy him but your blood.

Aura. No, Sir—nothing but your blood—your blood, Sir.

E

Modely;

Modely. Say you so: why then, if nothing else will do, have at you by boy.

Aura. Look at your flint and your prime; are they in right order?

Modely. I warrant you.

Aura. Please to stand wide a little, Sir; a ball may graze. *[to Freehold.]*

Now, come on, Sir. Let us retreat from each other five yards, then turn round upon our heels at one motion, and let fly. Are you ready?

[They retire and turn round; Modely fires, and Aura drops.]

Freehold. Oh, he is shot! he is killed!

Modely. Curse on my steady hand!

Freehold. Help! murder! murder! help.

Enter Countrymen [crying.]

This way, this way.

Modely. Say you so? nay then 'tis time to save one; by your leave, as fast as my feet or my fears can carry me.

[Exeunt all but Freehold and Aura.]

Freehold. This was admirably performed; I was afraid you durst not have stood the powder.

Aura. No, no, I put in half a charge, and no wadding --- I had really much ado to provoke him to fight; so, so, we'll shew him a little country play now.

Freehold. I must wait upon his companion, honest Heartwell. He expects me to attend him to Sir John's, according to his wife's request.

Aura. Do so; while I flip the back way through the orchard, into the hall house, that I may be with you time enough to finish my part: this is a day of business, i' faith.

[Exeunt Aura.]

Enter

Enter Heartwell.

Heartwell. How could you use a lover so roughly? I saw it all; the little girl stood his fire gallantly.

Freehold. O most heroically! O' my conscience I believe she would have fought him in earnest.

Heartwell. Is he taken?

Freehold. Ay, ay, we have him fast by this time I warrant.

Heartwell. Well, then let his fears pay the price of his sin: I think his punishment very just. But see where old steddly muscles comes, in forms to introduce us.

Freehold. Ay, come on now; you shall see a worthy piece of antiquity, a right bred old English country gentleman; one who keeps open house the whole year round; and yet never took or paid a penny for a vote in his life.

Enter Shacklefigure.

Shack. Sir, with the greatest submission, if it shall be your worship's good pleasure, I will wait on the company at the hall, and know if it shall be their pleasure to receive you.

[Exit Shacklefigure.]

Freehold. Do so, old stiff rump, do—this fellow keeps himself as regular as his day book.

Heartwell. Company! what company?

Freehold. A friend or two only, perhaps, that Sir John has invited to a dance, or so.

Heartwell. A dance---a friend---'death, you distract me. Excuse me to him, I beg you.

Freehold. No, no;---what, you must bear with a little noise at first.

[Exit.]

E 2

SCENE

SCENE II.

A Hall in Sir J. English's House.

Enter Heartwell and Freehold, meeting Flora and Country Men and Women.

Heartwell. My love! my dear! I am surprized! Why hast thou changed thyself from what thou wert?

Flora. To tell you, Sir, the truth, then, I was obliged to change my dress; my landlord has obliged me to it; and you know we country folks must obey our landlords.

Heartwell. Well, I am satisfied---you have obeyed him then.

Flora. Yes, Sir,--- but he is very obstinate, self-willed and I think a little too barbarously insists---

Heartwell. Insists! upon what?

Freehold. Why, Sir, I'll tell you, in short, 'tis this--- the Lord of our Manor has claimed by prescription, time out of mind, and still does claim, the first favour from every tenant's daughter married here; and has sent for you to let you know his claim.

Heartwell. Furies! damnation! What do you mean? Madam, what does all this tend to?

Flora. Why 'tis even so, husband.

Heartwell. Oh! very well, very well; tell me, thou devil in an angel's form,---wherefore was I chosen out to be thus abused.

Freehold. Because you are a man of fortune, Sir; because she hopes in a little time to break your heart, and enjoy the full third of two thousands pounds a year.

Heartwell. Pray madam, favour me---you see I bear this affair very calmly--pray tell me, tho' I suppose 'tis
no

no unreasonable request--what particular obligations you have to this landlord?

Flora. Such Sir, of such a nature---as nothing can dissolve---I love him passionately, and I believe his affection for me is mutual; nay, I hope it will endure to the last moment of my life.

Heartwell [*singing*] Tol, lol, lol, lol---Pray me'm,---what's o'clock? I have been married but four hours, and I am breeding already. Get my horses ready; I'll ride post to Japan, but I'll be rid of this affair; but first I'll cut this toll-taking rascal's throat. What his name? where is he? who is the landlord?

Flora. You are this landlord, Sir; the sole Lord of this demesne and me. This morning I was mistress of this house, these servants, and all the country within three miles round us: now they are yours; you are their master now.

Freehold. What say you, Sir? shall the landlord have his due or no?

Heartwell. My heart, my tongue, my eyes, my soul, o'erflow with joy.

Flora. I was resolved, fully resolved, never to venture on a husband, 'till I was certainly convinced, my person, and not my fortune, was his aim; that proof you have most generously given me; and I hope you will pardon the little deceits I have used to procure these assurances.

Heartwell. Give me thy hand, thy heart; there let me dwell for ever.

Freehold. But see your friend in bonds, Mr. Modely!

[*Modely brought in by two countrymen and a constable.*]

Heartwell. What! in captivity, George?

Constable. An it please your worship we have catch'd a vagrom man here, who has committed a murder, as I may say, in neighbour Freehold's five acres; and so, Sir, an like you

you, we bring him hither, to take his exhibition upon the said burglary afore Sir Jaun.

Heartwell. Murdered! who has he murder'd?

Constable. Nea, nea, I know not—the young fellow and he beliken ha' had some words abouten their sweethearts—and so he shot 'en—that's aw.

Heartwell. I always told you, George, what these wild ways would bring you to; but you would still run riot upon every thing. What cou'd you expect?

Modely. Yes faith, we have made a very pretty expedition; one of us is married, and t'other's going to be hang'd. My comfort is, I shall be out of my pain first. However, I don't doubt, as this was a gentleman's duel, I shall have gentleman's play for my life. Keep my chamber a month or two, touch cold iron, and come out as free as liberty. While you, having beat your poor wings in vain against the bar of your conjugal cage, sit fullenly molting the remainder of your feathers, and sicken to death o'the pip.

Freehold. I believe I shall secure that affair. I can prove premeditated malice; I can prove the challenge; and you know very well I saw you shoot him before his pistol was cock'd.

Modely. So, so; nay then my business is done! thou Devil, what have I done to thee, that thou tormentest me thus? If I cou'd come at thee, I'd pawn my credit for one sin more, and send thee down to the father of falsehood, with a lie in thy mouth.

Flora. Don't vex the poor man so, all his time will be little enough; don't put him into a passion now.

Modely. Insulting devil.

Freehold. Have you no feeling.—No sense of your condition?

Modely. What, Mr. Constable, am I to be set up here like a Shrove-tide cock, to be pested by every clown in the hundred.

Enter

Enter Sir John.

Sir John. Give you joy, cousin; give you joy. Codso, you prog very well for yourself. I did not know you went a husband hunting all this while. Give you joy, Sir; give you joy.

Heartwell. Sir, here's an angry person, an acquaintance of mine, who has committed a gentleman's murder, and is in great haste for his mittimus; pray dispatch him.

Enter another Constable and two Countrymen (with Aura, Prisoner.)

2d Constable. An it please your worship, here's another vagrom that we have taken upon deposition of his concerns in the said murder.

Sir John. Bring him nearer; shew me his face. Codso, a pretty young fellow! let me look! What? How! Madam Aura! as I live!

Modely. Ha! Aura! Harkee, my little reprobate bully: I am surprizingly rejoiced to see thee; faith I am. Gad I I never was so much in love with thee in my life. Heartwell, how dost. Madam Flora, your most obedient. Joy, Madam; joy, Freehold! faith thou art a very clever old gentleman. Sir John, I rejoice to see you.—I am prodigiously pleased, in troth; I was in a horrible cold sweat just now, though my proud heart would not own it.

Flora. Ah! if they could but frighten you into sobriety once.

Modely. I should sink into a husband; tho' faith, I find a strange stir within me about that whimsical girl there. Hark ye, Madam, dare you venture upon a rake, in full assurance (as some ladies have) that your charms will reduce him?

Aura.

Aura. And so fell a martyr to my pride instead of my virtue.

Freehold. Hold, Sir, I have some interest here, and I don't think you tame enough yet to be married. But if the girl is foolish enough to venture, why let her own inclination lead her.

Aura. Thank you, Sir. I think I would reclaim the wildest hawk that ever flew. What say you? Dare you venture on me?

Modely. I'd marry thee though I wrought with my hands for thy daily support; my whole soul, all my wishes, are centered in thee.

Aura. Ay; but when we are married, they'll perhaps move eccentrically again. Marriage is a tedious journey in a heavy road. Many an honest fellow, who set out briskly at first, has been horribly tired before he reached his inn at night.

Modely. Try me—trust me!

Aura. I tell you, before I try and trust you, you must serve me faithfully at least two whole months together; and then if we like one another as well as we do now—why we'll settle our fortunes and our inclinations.

Modely. And jog on in the road of our fathers.

Aura. Amen.

Modely. So be it.

Heartwell. Well, George, let these accidents make you remember; that there is no real lasting good but in virtue; and that the greatest happiness below consists in honourable love.

When Heaven conspicuous merit wou'd regard,

A virtuous woman is the great reward.

This blessing gives a taste of joys above,

Beauty and virtue, harmony and love.

F I N I S.

